FROM THE LEAD WRITER OF THE DRAGON AGE GAMES
DRAGON AGE
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DRAGON AGE
1 OF 3
BIOWARE
THOSE WHO SPEAK
DAVID GAIDER | ALEXANDER FREED | CHAD HARDIN

DRAGON AGE™

THOSE WHO SPEAK

Part 1 of 3

For nearly a decade, King Alistair of Ferelden has ruled with a steady hand, seeing to his homeland's reconstruction after the darkspawn blight. But when the words of a strange witch revealed that his father—King Maric—might still be alive, he set out to find Aurelian Titus, the mysterious mage responsible for Maric's disappearance.

But this story is not Alistair's alone.

The pirate Isabela has seen terrors across Thedas and plundered the ships and strongholds of the world's wealthiest merchants. Now the hired hand and confidante of King Alistair, she enjoys the luxury of a clean conscience—as well as steady pay for herself and her crew—on their journey to the North . . .

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CHAPTER 1
WE CAME TO TEVINTER -- BETTER KNOWN AS THE ARSE END OF ALL NIGHTMARES -- TO MURDER A MAN.
NOT MY USUAL CRIME, BUT OUR ROYAL PASSENGER NEEDED A FAVOR, SO I VOLUNTEERED.
MY CREW WAS LESS ENTHUSIASTIC -- THE WORDS "MUTINY" AND "QUEEN BITCH" WERE USED -- BUT A BARREL OF WINE AND A CHEST FULL OF SILVER SWAYED MOST OF THEM.
THE REST HELD OUT FOR A PROMISE THAT WE'D STAY TO THE COASTLINE -- AWAY FROM QUNARI WATERS.
I AGREED, OF COURSE.
TEVINTER'S DEMON-LOVING MAGE LORDS DON'T SEEM HALF BAD NEXT TO THE QUN.

NO TROUBLE IN SIGHT, UNLESS YOU COUNT THE WHOLE DAMNED CITY.
KEEP WATCH, AND IF OUR MEN SIGNAL --
-- WE'LL GET WORD TO YOU.
GET WORD TO KING ALISTAIR.
WE'RE HERE ON HIS COIN, AND HE'S LIKE A LOST PUPPY AWAY FROM HIS HOMELAND.
ENJOY THE BALL, THEN, CAPTAIN.
KILL ME NOW.

THINGS I INSTANTLY HATE: THE MAGISTERS, THE SLAVE TENDERS, THE DRESS CODE, THE OVERSEASONED MEAT.
(BECAUSE OF COURSE IF YOU CAN'T SMELL HOW EXPENSIVE THE SPICES ARE, WHAT'S THE POINT?)
THINGS I WORRY ABOUT: NO WEAPONS IN SIGHT, BUT EVERYONE IS ARMED.
ANGRY MAGES WILL MELT OUR EYES WITH WITCH FIRE IF THINGS GO SOUTH.
LET ME INTRODUCE YOU -- HE FOUND MY HOUSE SLAVES...
ANY WORD FROM TAL ARAMIS?
...EVER BEEN TO VYRANTIUM?
ONE HUNDRED DEAD QUNARI, BUT OF COURSE THEY KEEP ATTACKING.
A CONVERT TO THE QUN, ON MY OWN PROPERTY!
THINGS I FIND PROMISING: THE WINE'S PROBABLY NOT POISONED, WHICH COULD LIVEN UP THE NIGHT...
MAE, YOU BEAUTIFUL MINX!

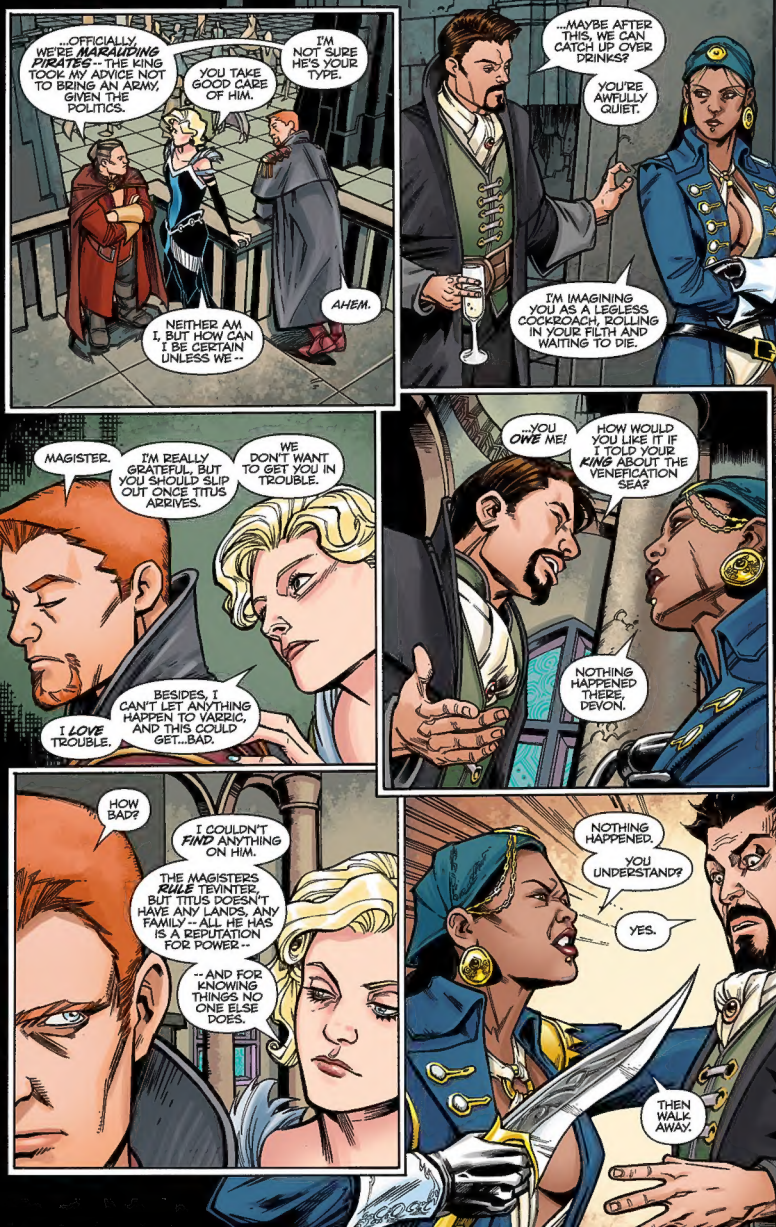
VARRIC, YOU CALL YOUR CROSSBOW SWEETER NAMES THAN THAT.
I SHOULD TAKE YOU HOME AND HAVE YOU SPANKED.
NOW, MAE...YOU PROMISED DISCRETION.
BESIDES, WHAT WOULD THE SERVANTS SAY?
THEY'D LIKELY SAY IT WAS A SLOW EVENING.
THE WOMAN'S NEW, BUT THE DWARF IS MY FAULT.
I ASKED HIM ALONG -- HE'S THE BEST LIAR I KNOW, AND FOR SOMEONE CALLING HIMSELF A "BUSINESSMAN," HE'S GOT TERRIFIC AIM. ALL TOLD, HE'S VERY NEARLY TOLERABLE.
ALISTAIR, THIS IS MAEVARIS TILANI -- WIDOW TO MY COUSIN THOROLD.
KING OR NOT, YOU'VE GOT HANDS LIKE A STONEMASON.
I'D LOVE TO SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH THEM.
IT'S...A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU, MAGISTER.
SHE'S REALLY A MAGISTER?
RECOGNIZED BY THE IMPERIAL SENATE.
PLANNING TO MAKE VARRIC'S SPECIAL FRIEND YOUR FRIEND, TOO?
THIS ONE ISN'T MY FAULT!
ALISTAIR IS...AN ODD SORT OF KING, WHO MAKES ME LAUGH AND WHO'S BETTER AT THIS THAN HE'LL EVER REALIZE.
AND YOU MUST BE ISABELA.
LORD DEVON LIT UP WHEN HE HEARD YOUR NAME, AND HE INSISTED ON HELPING.
SHALL WE MINGLE?
WHAT?

I DIDN'T MEAN TO SURPRISE YOU.
ESCORT FOR A KING NOW?
JUST TRANSPORT AND SECURITY, OR--
DON'T. SAY. A. WORD.

AURELIAN TITUS -- IS HE HERE?
MY CONTACTS SAY HE WILL BE, ALONG WITH EVERY OTHER MAGISTER IN THE CITY.
WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED, ANYWAY?
FOR STARTERS?
HE'S COLLABORATED WITH THE CROW ASSASSINS AND COMMITTED ACTS OF MAGICAL AGGRESSION AGAINST MY COUNTRY.

BUT MOSTLY, IT'S A PERSONAL GRUDGE.
THANK YOU, VARRIC.

...MAE ASKED ME TO WATCH FOR YOUR SHIP AND KEEP IT OFF THE REGISTRY.
I DIDN'T THINK YOU WERE STILL ALIVE, TO BE HONEST.
I'M ALIVE.
DON'T MISTAKE ME, I'M VERY GLAD.


...OFFICIALLY, WE'RE MARAUDING PIRATES -- THE KING TOOK MY ADVICE NOT TO BRING AN ARMY, GIVEN THE POLITICS.
YOU TAKE GOOD CARE OF HIM.
I'M NOT SURE HE'S YOUR TYPE.
AHEM.
NEITHER AM I, BUT HOW CAN I BE CERTAIN UNLESS WE --
...MAYBE AFTER THIS, WE CAN CATCH UP OVER DRINKS?
YOU'RE AWFULLY QUIET.
I'M IMAGINING YOU AS A LEGLESS COCKROACH, ROLLING IN YOUR FILTH AND WAITING TO DIE.
MAGISTER.
I'M REALLY GRATEFUL, BUT YOU SHOULD SLIP OUT ONCE TITUS ARRIVES.
WE DON'T WANT TO GET YOU IN TROUBLE.
I LOVE TROUBLE.
BESIDES, I CAN'T LET ANYTHING HAPPEN TO VARRIC, AND THIS COULD GET...BAD.
...YOU OWE ME!
HOW WOULD YOU LIKE IT IF I TOLD YOUR KING ABOUT THE VENEFICATION SEA?
NOTHING HAPPENED THERE, DEVON.
HOW BAD?
I COULDN'T FIND ANYTHING ON HIM.
THE MAGISTERS RULE TEVINTER BUT TITUS DOESN'T HAVE ANY LANDS, ANY FAMILY -- ALL HE HAS IS A REPUTATION FOR POWER --
-- AND FOR KNOWING THINGS NO ONE ELSE DOES.
NOTHING HAPPENED. YOU UNDERSTAND?
YES.
THEN WALK AWAY.

WHAT DID I MISS?
IS THE MAGISTER POINTING OUT HER SLAVES?
EVERYONE HAS SLAVES IN TEVINTER, DARLING--
KAFFAS!
HE'S EARLY.
MAGISTER TITUS.
IS THE QUNARI ARISHOK DEFEATED?
MAGISTER TITUS.
YOUR PRESENCE HONORS US.
MAGISTER TITUS.
BENEATH THE CITY OF KIRKWALL, BELOW WHERE THE RAT CATCHERS PISS ON STONES TO MARK THEIR *TERRITORY*, THERE ARE RUINS.
VARRIC AND I HAVE BEEN THERE, AND WE DON'T *TALK* ABOUT IT, AND I CAN ONLY REMEMBER IT LIKE A SWEAT-STAINED BAD DREAM--
-- THE KIND WHERE EVERY CHOICE YOU MAKE IS *WRONG*, AND YOU'RE WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO REACH FROM THE SHADOWS AND PLUCK OUT YOUR EYES.
BEING HERE NOW IS LIKE BEING UNDERNEATH KIRKWALL AGAIN.
I HATE TEVINTER.

SPREAD OUT AND BE READY.
YOU'RE SURE--
NOW.
AURELIAN TITUS?
YES?
DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
NO.
FUNNY, THAT.
YOU TRIED HARD ENOUGH TO GET YOUR HANDS ON ME.
YOU WEREN'T AS LUCKY AS YOU WERE WITH MY FATHER.
AH.
TAINTED SCION OF CALENHAD.
THE CIRCLE OF BLOOD COMPLETE.
KING ALISTAIR OF FERELDEN.
WELCOME TO TEVINTER.
STOP THAT.
I WANT TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO KING MARIC.

I SEE.
FALL.
I'D REALLY RATHER NOT.
AARAH!

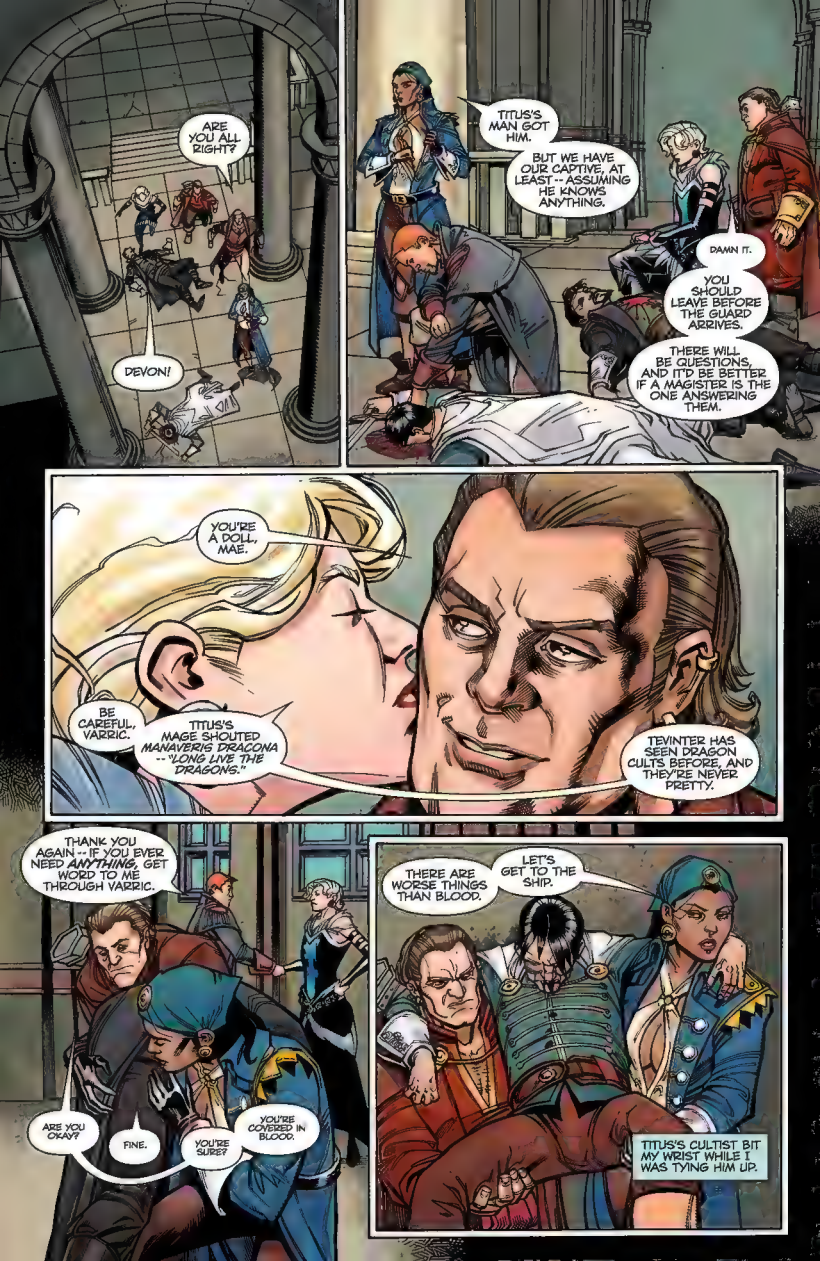
HE IS A TEMPLAR!
SEIZE HIM!
MANAVERIS DRACONA!
HE'S GETTING AWAY!
FIGHT FIRST, THEN CHASE!

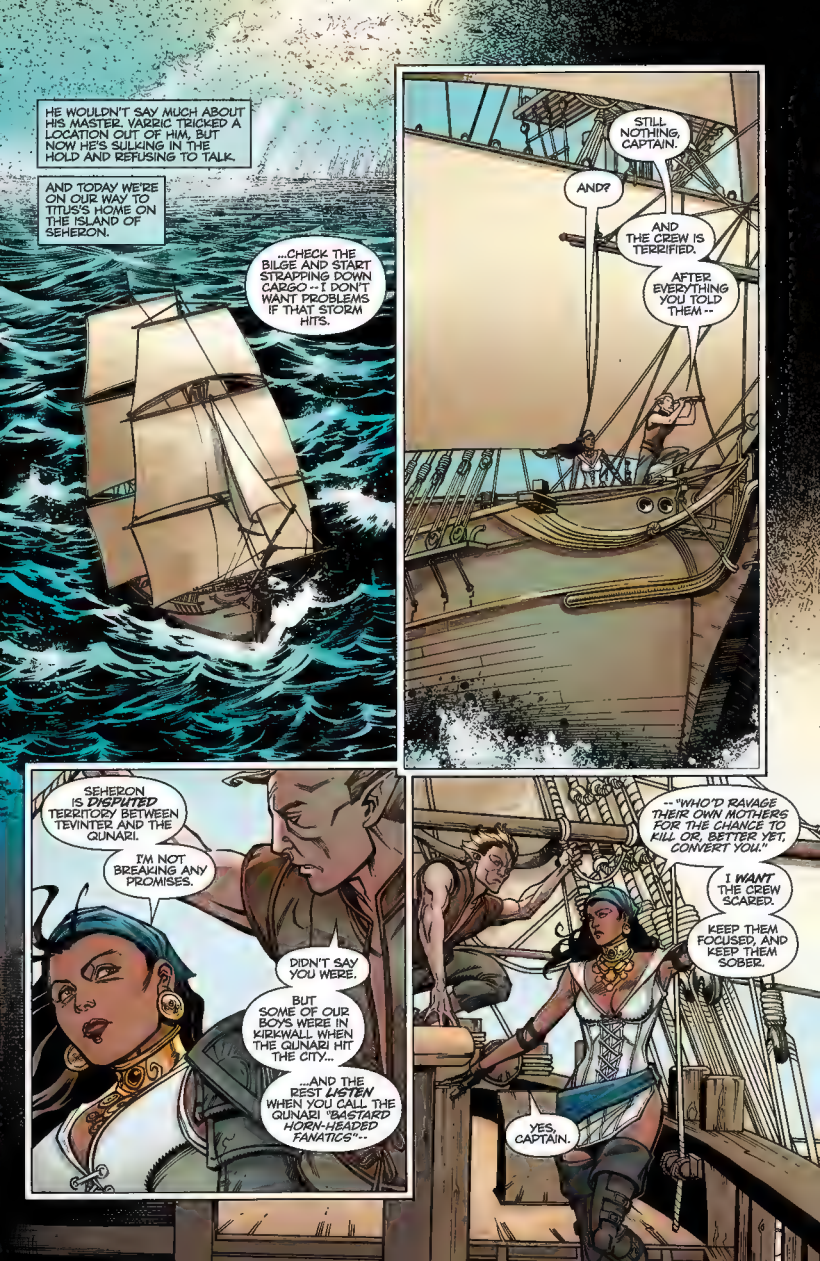
IT'S FUNNY HOW MANY PARTIES I GO TO END UP LIKE THIS.
I DON'T THINK THAT'S FUNNY.
THIS ISN'T YOUR FIGHT, MAGISTER TILANI!
OUR MASTER HAS NO QUARREL WITH YOU.
IT DOES MEAN FEWER INVITATIONS.
SO HOW'D YOU DO THAT THING WITH TITUS...?
I USED TO BE A TEMPLAR -- FIGHTING MAGES IS WHAT WE DO.
AFTER THE TELLARI SWAMPS, I THOUGHT I'D GET BACK IN PRACTICE.
I PROMISED THESE PEOPLE MY PROTECTION.
I AM A MAGISTER, AND I STAND BY MY WORD.
HURRY IT UP, MAE!

THE THINGS YOU LEARN ABOUT PEOPLE...
YOU'RE A WHORE, AND YOU'LL DIE LIKE ONE.
WHAT?
DAMNATION -- WE'RE RUNNING LOW.
WE NEED ONE ALIVE.
GOT IT!

REMIND ME NEVER TO MAKE YOU ANGRY.
GOOD ADVICE FOR ANYONE.
YOU!
OUT OF THE WAY!
PLEASE--
AH!

ISABELA.
THANK YOU...I THOUGHT HE WAS GOING TO--


ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
DEVON!
TITUS'S MAN GOT HIM.
BUT WE HAVE OUR CAPTIVE, AT LEAST - ASSUMING HE KNOWS ANYTHING.
DAMN IT.
YOU SHOULD LEAVE BEFORE THE GUARD ARRIVES.
THERE WILL BE QUESTIONS, AND IT'D BE BETTER IF A MAGISTER IS THE ONE ANSWERING THEM.
YOU'RE A DOLL, MAE.
BE CAREFUL, VARRIC.
TITUS'S MAGE SHOUTED *MANAVERIS DRACONA* -- "LONG LIVE THE DRAGONS."
TEVINTER HAS SEEN DRAGON CULTS BEFORE, AND THEY'RE NEVER PRETTY.
THANK YOU AGAIN -- IF YOU EVER NEED *ANYTHING*, GET WORD TO ME THROUGH VARRIC.
ARE YOU OKAY?
FINE.
YOU'RE SURE?
YOU'RE COVERED IN BLOOD.
THERE ARE WORSE THINGS THAN BLOOD.
LET'S GET TO THE SHIP.
TITUS'S CULTIST BIT MY WRIST WHILE I WAS TYING HIM UP.


HE WOULDN'T SAY MUCH ABOUT HIS MASTER. VARRIC TRICKED A LOCATION OUT OF HIM, BUT NOW HE'S SULKING IN THE HOLD AND REFUSING TO TALK.
AND TODAY WE'RE ON OUR WAY TO TITUS'S HOME ON THE ISLAND OF SEHERON.
...CHECK THE BILGE AND START STRAPPING DOWN CARGO -- I DON'T WANT PROBLEMS IF THAT STORM HITS.
STILL NOTHING, CAPTAIN.
AND?
AND THE CREW IS TERRIFIED.
AFTER EVERYTHING YOU TOLD THEM --
-- "WHO'D RAVAGE THEIR OWN MOTHERS FOR THE CHANCE TO KILL OR, BETTER YET, CONVERT YOU."
I WANT THE CREW SCARED.
KEEP THEM FOCUSED, AND KEEP THEM SOBER.
YES, CAPTAIN.
SEHERON IS DISPUTED TERRITORY BETWEEN TEVINTER AND THE QUNARI.
I'M NOT BREAKING ANY PROMISES.
DIDN'T SAY YOU WERE.
BUT SOME OF OUR BOYS WERE IN KIRKWALL WHEN THE QUNARI HIT THE CITY...
...AND THE REST LISTEN WHEN YOU CALL THE QUNARI "BASTARD HORN-HEADED FANATICS"--

...SHE SETS ONE FOOT ON DECK, AND YOU FORGET WHAT SHE'S LIKE WITH A BOTTLE OF RUM AND A CROWDED TAVERN.
I DON'T FORGET -- I'VE STILL GOT THE SCARS FROM OSTWICK.
WHAT?
NEVER MIND.
DO YOU HAVE A PLAN FOR TITUS, YET?
I HAVEN'T THOUGHT THAT FAR AHEAD.
UH-HUH.
YOU DON'T SEEM TOO BOTHERED BY WHAT HAPPENED IN TEVINTER, EITHER.
I FOUND THE MAN WHO STOLE MY FATHER AWAY.
THE MAN WHO -- INTENTIONALLY OR NOT -- STARTED FERELDEN ON THE PATH TO CIVIL WAR.
SOMETIMES YOU NEED TO FLUSH A RABBIT OUT OF ITS HOLE SO YOU CAN CHASE IT DOWN.
AND IF IT RUNS BACK INTO ITS HOLE TO GATHER A HUNDRED OTHER RABBITS THAT COME AFTER YOU?
THEN WE'LL BE LIVING HIGH ON RABBIT STEW FOR MONTHS TO COME.
I HATE RABBITS.
ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY USE BLOOD MAGIC.
I HEAR YOU.
CAPTAIN!

MAKER'S BLOODY BALLS.
WHAT'S GOING ON?
TWO QUNARI DREADNOUGHTS, COMING UP FAST.
CAN WE OUTRUN THEM?
YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?
WE'VE GOT A BATTLE COMING!
GRAB YOUR WEAPONS AND READY BUCKETS -- WE'RE APT TO SEE FIRES!
GO WITH VARRIC, GRAB A SKIFF, AND TAKE TO SEA.
IF WE GO ON THE OFFENSIVE, YOU MIGHT SLIP AWAY--
WE'RE NOT ABANDONING YOU.
I HAVE FRIENDS AMONG THE QUNARI.
A FRIEND, SORT OF.
MAYBE I--
I'M NOT LOSING ANOTHER SHIP TO THE OX-MEN.
I'M SORRY.
DON'T APOLOGIZE -- JUST BE READY TO FIGHT.

THROOM
GAATLOK CANNON!
INCOMING!
KRRAAK!
THAT WAS A WARNING SHOT.
BASTARDS MEAN TO BOARD US.
THAT WAS A WARNING SHOT?
THEY'RE MONSTERS.
WHEN WE GET BACK TO SHORE--
--A DRINK FOR EVERY STINKING QUINARI HORN WE BRING HOME!

YOUR COMMAND, TAMASSRAN?
TAKE THEM PRISONER.
ALL OF THEM.
TO BE CONTINUED!